



News Release

Communications New Brunswick

N.B. Human Rights Commission

Human Rights Commission releases annual report (05/12/23)

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FREDERICTON (CNB) - The following statement was issued by the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission concerning its 2004-05 annual report.

Amendments to the Human Rights Act

The last annual report outlined the February 2004 recommendations made by the commission to government, for amendments to the *Human Rights Act*. After considering these recommendations, government introduced amendments to the act. As of Jan. 31, 2005, two new grounds of prohibited discrimination have been added: social condition and political belief or activity.

The legislature is considering an additional amendment that would prevent an employer from enforcing a policy of mandatory retirement if there is a bona fide pension or retirement plan.

Partnerships

The commission continues to foster working relationships with other organizations in order to improve the service provided to its clients. These partnerships include the employment standards branch of the Department of Training and Employment Development, the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission, and other human rights commissions.

Improved service and promotion of human rights

In 2004-05, the commission continued to explore and implement the best case management practices that have been adopted in other jurisdictions.

The prevention focus remains twofold: to inform employers of their obligations to provide assistance to people with disabilities to allow them to work, and to explain the business case for human rights.

Work also continued on a number of boards of inquiry and related court cases. Some of these cases dealt with new issues, such as the rights of one same-sex partner to adopt the other partner's children.

In 2004-05, there was a significant increase in both the number of complaints received and the number that were dealt with. A total of 237 new complaints were received (44 of them against two employers), a 39 per cent increase over 171 from the previous year. At the same time, 193 complaints were closed (26 against one employer), an increase of 42 per cent over 136 from the previous year.

On April 4, 2004, the commission introduced an early mediation service, which allows parties to a complaint to reach a resolution before a full investigation is conducted. Early mediation has been so successful that more resources have been assigned to this function. Of the 193 complaints closed during the year, 40 were as a result of early mediation.

On average, the age of complaints on closure was 11 months. This is a significant improvement over the previous time of 30 months.

Work also began on the national conference that New Brunswick will host in June 2006.

"Our efforts to make the commission more effective in meeting the needs of New Brunswick's citizens have been successful," said Human Rights Commission chair Gordon Porter. "We now want to put more effort into informing and educating stakeholders on human rights issues.

"We also want the public to be more aware of the work of the commission and the outcomes that are achieved for individuals," Porter said. "We are just beginning to look at ways to get young people engaged, since it is their future rights we want to assure."

05/12/23

EDITOR'S NOTE: Printed copies of the 2004-05 annual report can be obtained by calling 1-888-471-2233. Electronic copies are available at: <http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/2004-05-Annual-Report-New-Brunswick-Human-Rights-Commission--Rapport-annuel-Commission-droits-personne-Nouveau-Brunswick.pdf>. MEDIA CONTACT: Francis Young, human rights officer, New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, 1-888-471-2233.

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